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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Conversation with Mr. Mansfield Sprague
Concerning Committee Paper on RFE and RL

1. This memorandum is for the information of the Director.

2. After the meeting of the Sprague Committee yesterday I had a short conversation with Mr. Sprague about the status of the Committee's report on RFE and RL. In view of the fragmented and inconclusive discussions and arguments which had gone on at the Committee meeting, it was not entirely clear to me what next steps the Committee proposed to take in formulating its recommendations. Mr. Sprague agreed that the discussion had been inconclusive but that as far as he was concerned, he knew where he stood and that was in favor of continuation of the two radios substantially along their present lines. He said he thought that the report should be edited and rewritten but that he doubted that its conclusions would differ substantially from the present draft. He said that he saw no point in adopting Mr. George Allen's proposal that endorsement of the radios be qualified by the words "for the time being." Mr. Sprague said that it seemed to him obvious and that he presumed it would also be obvious to the President that some drastic change in the political scene might require a review of this as well as other findings of the Committee. He thought that to write into the recommendations of the report words suggesting that they are provisional and only valid "for the time being" would vitiate the report and render it essentially meaningless.

3. Later in the day Mr. Nielsen referred to the same subject in the course of a telephone conversation. He said that he hoped that it was clearly understood that none of the unfavorable comment concerning the radios which the Committee staff had elicited during the course of its investigation involved criticism of the administration of the radios by the Agency or any of its representatives. There was in fact, he said,

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no such criticism. There was, however, a considerable body of opinion opposed to the radios as a matter of principle on the grounds that their activities were not compatible with the present detente, or that the funds involved could be more effectively expended in connection with other activities such as exchange programs or VOA, etc. None of the responsible officials of the State Department who expressed these views, however, was prepared, when specifically asked, to recommend liquidation of either radio.

4. Mr. Nielsen went on to say that he felt that the discussion had gone off the track as a result of C. D. Jackson's rather strong statement about the State Department attitude concerning the two unofficial radios. It was this statement that inspired Mr. Gray to ask whether there was any segment of opinion in the Government favorable to the liquidation of the radios at this time. This question, in turn, provoked George Allen's suggestion that approval of the radios be made provisional, etc.

5. Mr. Nielsen's impression is that the differences of view exemplified by C. D. Jackson on the one hand and certain elements of the State Department on the other are in fact basic and irreconcilable -- the difference between those who basically favor an unremitting hard line against the communists and those who favor an evolutionary line. The Committee's staff report, according to Mr. Nielsen, did not attempt to compromise or "paper over" this difference but simply ignored it on the theory that, irrespective of which view was right or prevailed, the radios should be continued at about their present level of expenditure, subject to effective policy control.

6. In fact certain provisions of the report do represent concessions to the opponents of the unofficial radios. The proposal that the unofficial radios lend time and facilities to VOA and the recommendation for enhanced controls over RFE fall in this category. Neither recommendation, however, is likely as a practical matter to have any particular adverse effect on the programs or activities of either radio.

7. Mr. Nielsen recognized that the draftsmanship of the paper left very much to be desired. He said that it would be rewritten to clarify various points touched on during the discussion. He promised to let us see a draft before the paper is submitted for further discussion.

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8. Cord Meyer reiterated your and his own concern that nothing should be left in the paper which could be used as a pretext for attacks upon the budgets of the two radios or of any other projects of the Agency directed against the Soviet bloc. My impression is that the only provision of the paper which presented dangers in this connection was the provision which suggested a review of the total effort against the bloc (radio, covert activities, etc.) with a view to a possible reallocation of this effort. I believe that there was general agreement that this provision should be eliminated from the paper. In any event we will be able to review further drafts to ensure elimination of language which might have unfavorable budgetary consequences.



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John A. Gross
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O/DDP

cc: DDCI

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